

**The Lower Snake River District
Resource Advisory Council Meeting
Wednesday, December 4, 2002
MINUTES**

Council Members Present: Robert Amidon, Bob Baker, Gil Green, Donna Griffin, Bill Platts, Russ Heughins, Sandra Mitchell, Rick Raymondi, Brenda Richards, John Robison, Chris Salove, and Don Weilmunster.

Council Members Absent: Ted Howard, Brian Schrage, and Ken Reid

BLM Advisory Present: Howard Hedrick, Designated Federal Official; MJ Byrne, RAC Coordinator; Dave Krosting, Daryl Albiston, Lou Ballard (for Rosemary Thomas), Jenna Whitlock, Mike O'Donnell, and Inez Dawson, Recorder

Statements attributed to individual council members are not direct quotes unless so indicated.

Council Business and General Information: Chairman Weilmunster called the meeting to order at 9:10 am. The agenda and various handouts were reviewed. New members, John Robison, and Chris Salove were introduced and provided background information. Nate Helm and Erica Dallas from Senators Craig and Crapo's office were also introduced.

Minutes: The RAC approved that the Chairman certify the Minutes of the August 14 Meeting.

Report on Phoenix RAC Meeting:

Chair Don Weilmunster reported that the National Meeting with RAC Chair's, BLM Director Clarke, and other senior BLM and DOI managers was a big success. The meeting was held in Phoenix, AZ on November 18- 20. Facilitated discussions were held about crosscutting topics of the RAC's across the nation. Participants were broken into five groups to discuss those topics.

The following morning, November 20th, a tele-video conference was held with the RAC Chairs and other participants in Phoenix as well as with RACs assembled throughout the nation. At that time, individual work group representatives reported their group's findings to all participants in Phoenix and viewers across the country. Director Clarke listened to each of the reports and responded to questions posed by each of the groups and tele-video viewers, as well as did other senior managers from BLM and DOI. *Detailed minutes of the meeting in Phoenix, and a summary are included with these minutes.*

A videotape of the tele-video conference was shown during the potluck Holiday luncheon in order for RAC Members viewing. He reported to the members that Director Clarke expressed her desire and willingness to meet and talk with RAC Members when she comes to Boise. Kathleen Clark said the RAC's can help the BLM by serving as liaisons within their communities, so issues in the ranching community, for example, can be addressed at RAC meetings with BLM. They can also serve in a role to help Secretary Gale Norton problem solve.

LSRD's RAC meetings are well attended compared to other RAC's. He attributed this to good coordination and communication, among the RAC Members, and leadership and guidance from the District Office. Chairman Weilmunster passed around a sheet of paper with a request that RAC Members identify the issues, in priority order, they wanted to discuss during 2003.

Key Points of the lunch discussion:

- RAC's can help build communication and trust between permittees and BLM
- RAC's serve BLM in the role of liaison with groups and communities
- Host an annual RAC Conference with BLM Director, DOI Secretary and other senior managers to re-energize and strengthen communications among the RAC Members
- Conduct state-wide discussions with Idaho's BLM Director & RAC Chairs
- Share success stories among all the RAC's
- Share RAC meeting minutes with other RAC's
- Share and identify statewide and regional cross-cutting issues and concerns
- Identify how are other RAC's assisting with development of Resource Management Plans
- Regional RAC groups could work to address BLM issues that cross state borders
- RAC could provide better support to collaborative efforts such as the Owyhee Initiative

There will be a meeting with the three Idaho RAC Chairs on January 18, 2003 to meet with Idaho's new BLM Director, K Lynn Bennett. Members were asked to send any suggestions or issues to Don for him to take to that meeting. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss issues and prioritize which of those the RAC's should focus on in 2003. Formation of Tri-RAC issue subcommittees will also be discussed. This will be a good opportunity to improve communication with the other two RAC's in Idaho. A report on the outcomes of the meeting will be given at the next RAC meeting.

Input on tele-conference:

Don stated the RAC could start out by working with cattlemen and ranchers where a lot of the disagreements start. RAC should identify one or two topics to focus on, such as sage grouse and grazing, for an example, and bring in experts to share and identify concerns.

Donna was very encouraged with the RAC presentation. She recommended a follow-thru with things already in place, we shouldn't just limit it to Idaho RAC, but make it Regional and across borders for better impact on issues. Sharing minutes would help Nationally to stay involved and motivated, to make a difference.

Brenda suggested we encourage the public to attend more RAC meetings, and to start meeting at night in different areas to get better attendance. Dave was in favor of more evening meetings to be able to reach a larger audience, and to share experiences. A decision should be made when to have meetings in various areas and get the word out so people could attend and present their issues to the RAC. People are caring more about the land and want to make a difference.

MJ reported our RAC should focus on a 2-way approach: communication and dialog. RAC should send a letter to Kathleen Clark about success stories, recommendations and how much it works. Don thanked MJ for all the work she does and the support she gives. She is helping to re-energize this RAC with her enthusiasm and dedication. Donna agreed with Don, that BLM needed to provide the RAC with clerical support for planning and coordination of RAC and subcommittee meetings.

Recommendations/Action Items: The RAC asked if BLM could provide them with information about litigation BLM is involved with, particularly with permittees in the District. This would help the RAC with its liaison role with communities in the District. Bob, Don and Russ volunteered to work on the Standards and Guides review that BLM is proposing. This may be an issue for discussion with the other RAC Chairs and Idaho BLM Director Bennett.

Subgroup Reports:

River Recreation Management - Donna Griffin:

Donna discussed money issues and priorities on River Management Groups. Issues about how the Fee Demonstration program is working.

Recommendations/Action Items: RAC will send a letter to Senator Craig and other officials about user fees for recreation. It should mention guidelines on how money is used, or distributed, for the right category.

Off Highway Vehicle – Need feedback from ranchers and all groups on this. Will discuss more on this after the December 10 tele-conference. Terry Heslin is still working on the map development. A subcommittee meeting to review the status of data collected and mapping is being planned for December. A report of that meeting will be given at the next RAC meeting. Once maps have been developed, public meetings will be hosted to give an opportunity for the public and user groups to provide BLM with their feedback.

Recommendations/Action Items: It was suggested that Don write a letter to other RAC groups about today's meeting. We could set an example on public meeting issues and how to get groups involved.

MJ discussed membership in subcommittees: Who would like to get involved in River Recreation Management; Off Highway Vehicle; Fire and Fuels Management; Resource Management; or Sage Grouse Habitat Management. Willard Abbott a former RAC member has agreed to continue to participate on the RMP subcommittee. Brenda Richards agreed to join and chair the Rangeland Standards and Guidelines subcommittee. The list of subcommittee membership was passed around with the request that RAC Members indicate which subcommittees they were interested in working on. An updated list will be sent out for review prior to the February RAC meeting.

Public Comment: None

Resource Management Plans – Gil Green

Discussion: They had a good response from the workshop on September 10 about finalizing issue statements that will be used in development of the Desired Future Conditions and Alternatives for analysis in the Environmental Impact Statement that will be prepared as part of

the RMP. Another series of public meetings will be held December 9, 11, and 16 to discuss the draft Desired Future Conditions Statements and get feedback from attendees.

Sandra Mitchell gave an update on the Owyhee Initiative. Not much has been accomplished in the last few months, other than information gathering, and small, informal subgroup meetings. Initiative members are talking to the ranching community about the problems they are having with the spread of Juniper. No agreements have been made yet. Many of the parties are still far apart in their discussions.

Recommendations/Action Items: Send out newsletters to inform the public about RMP meetings. We could use more names for the mailing lists; we should send out about four response cards to target everyone. If anyone is involved in the RMP, they are on the mailing list. Facilitators are helping the collaboration process by encouraging participation and input from the public.

Public Comment: None

Sage Grouse Habitat Management – Rick Raymondi

Discussion: Action Plan.

The Panel discussion at the RAC's August meeting identified the following issues and actions for the Sage Grouse subcommittee to work on during their meetings in 2003.

- Review Framework BLM uses for sage grouse habitat
- Review and provide comments on the Jarbidge Sage Grouse Conservation Plan
- Evaluate how BLM manages fire and how it effects sage grouse

Recommendations/Action Items: Review and comment on the "Framework to Assist in Making Sensitive Species Habitat Assessments for BLM-Administered Public Lands in Idaho – Sage Grouse" and determine whether to recommend that BLM formally adopt the 'Draft' document.

A letter will be drafted for the Chair's signature, nominating RAC Member Bill Platts to serve on the Idaho Sage Grouse Habitat Management Advisory Group. A cc should be sent to the Idaho and National BLM Directors. Copies should be shared with the other Idaho RACs to strengthen communications with them.

Public Comment: None

Field Office Highlights

Four Rivers Field Office – Daryl Albiston

Four Rivers is wrapping up the field season. They're still looking at *Lepidium* sites in southern Idaho. The Cascade Land Exchange is close to being completed; also the Four Rivers' Rangeland Standards and Guide Assessment should be finished by the end of January.

Jarbidge Field Office – Eddie Guerrero

Pasadena Valley OHV is an issue right now. We're working with locals and private landowners to close road access. It has become a safety issue with motorcyclists and cars. Eddie discussed the proposed TNR conversion on the allotments that have Resource Concepts Inc. (RCI) contracted to gather data and write EA. Now they're dealing with the potential listing of

Lepidium. He reviewed the status of lawsuits that Jarbidge is involved in, and how the Field Office is responding to complaints. The class action lawsuit resulting from damages to croplands in southern Idaho involving the herbicide, OUST, will probably take years to resolve.

Ending Discussion:

Agenda Items for Upcoming Meetings:

- Update on OHV mapping
- EIS weed treatment
- WSA presentation
- Invite Owyhee Initiative Cattle Association and/or National Resource Commission (NRC) to discuss issues – hand-outs to view before the meeting
- Comments on Framework
- Presentation on allotments - information sent out before the meeting
- Grazing allotments on WSAs

Recommendations/Action Items: Grazing during the drought season has to be addressed. The RAC requested a presentation by BLM and the State of Idaho on this issue during the meeting in February.

Meeting Calendar Dates:

Tentative meeting - February 25-28: Secretary of Interior in Boise

February – Discuss June or July field/float trip

May 21 – Pursue going to Marsing, McCall or Nampa

August 26 – Meeting (MJ will ask Ted Howard if the RAC can hold this meeting on the Shoshone Paiute Reservation.)

November 18 – Meeting

The meeting was adjourned at 2:15 p.m.

Certified by:

Don Weilmunster
RAC Chairman

Date

Date